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Teresa J. Hill, Secretary
Environmental and Public
Protection Cabinet

Commonwealth of Kentucky
Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet
Public Service Commission

John W. Clay
Commissioner

Timothy J. LeDonne
Commissioner
Department of Public Protection

211 Sower Blvd.
P.O. Box 615
Frankfort, Kentucky 40602-0615
Telephone: (502) 564-3940
Fax: (502) 564-3460

NEWS RELEASE

Contact:
Andrew Melnykovich
502-564-3940, ext.208
502-330-5981 (cell)

Note to editors: April 3 marks the 33rd anniversary of the worst outbreak of tornadoes in recorded history in Kentucky. In all, 20 twisters left a trail of destruction through a wide area of the state. While it is unlikely such a catastrophe will recur in the near future, it is prudent to plan for whatever nature has in store for us. The following is the fifth of a six-part series on preparing for and coping with effects of a storm. This installment reminds residents of the hazards of downed electric lines.

PSC OFFERS SAFETY TIPS FOR STORM SEASON ***Downed power lines, other dangers still lurk after storm has passed***

FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 29, 2007) – Staying safe during the spring and summer storm season is about more than taking shelter in rough weather. It also means avoiding hazards a violent storm leaves behind.

For example, nearly every severe storm manages to bring down power lines. To stay safe, stay away. **DO NOT APPROACH ANY DOWNED LINES.** You cannot tell if a line is live simply by looking at it. Report downed lines to your local power company or by calling 911. It is especially important to immediately report sparking lines because they pose a fire hazard.

It's difficult to tell electric lines from telecommunications lines, which often share a common pole. Lines that normally do not carry dangerous current can become conductors when entangled with power lines. **TREAT ANY FALLEN LINE AS DANGEROUS.**

Fallen trees, limbs and other vegetation can conceal fallen power lines and conduct electricity, especially when wet. Do not try to clear storm debris until you are certain it is safe.

Damaged trees and limbs, as well as damaged lines, can fall long after a storm has passed. It is wise to avoid standing beneath them.

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Clearing vegetation near utility lines is a job best left to a professional. If you are concerned about vegetation near lines on your property, contact the utility company, which can take care of the problem or recommend a reputable contractor.

Do not drive over fallen lines.

If a line falls across your vehicle while you are in it, remain inside the vehicle until help arrives. It is safer inside the vehicle. If you do not have a cell phone, attempt to attract the attention of passers-by by honking your horn or flashing your lights. Warn them to stay clear and ask them to summon help.

If circumstances force you to leave the vehicle before the line is made safe – a threat of fire, for example – do so in a way that minimizes the chance of electric shock:

- Remove or leave handbags, belts, jewelry and loose clothing that could snag on the vehicle when you exit.
- Exit the vehicle as far from the wire as possible. Jump as far from the vehicle as you can. Do not hold onto the door or any other part of the vehicle.
- Land with both feet together, then hop on both feet or shuffle away with both feet on the ground for at least 20 feet before beginning to walk normally.

In case of a power outage, unplug or turn off appliances and electronic devices to guard against damage from power surges. Leave refrigerators and freezers closed.

When using a generator for temporary power, do so in a way that ensures safety:

- Do not operate generators in a garage or other enclosed area. To avoid carbon monoxide poisoning, generators should only be operated outdoors.
- Use a generator properly sized for the load. Starting an electric motor, such as a refrigerator compressor, requires more electricity than the amount needed to keep it running. **DO NOT OVERLOAD YOUR GENERATOR.**

- Use only three-prong, grounded extension cords, properly rated for the load, to connect appliances to generators.

- Do not attempt to feed power into your home by adapting an extension cord to connect a generator to a wall outlet. This can cause a fire.

- **DO NOT CONNECT A GENERATOR TO INSIDE WIRING IN ANY WAY UNLESS YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS IS EQUIPPED WITH A TRANSFER SWITCH THAT PREVENTS POWER FROM “BACKFEEDING” – FLOWING BACK INTO THE WIRES THAT SUPPLY YOUR ELECTRICITY.**

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Workers attempting to restore electrical service can be killed or severely injured by power flowing back into lines which they assume are not carrying electricity. Backfeeding also can permanently damage a generator.

Widespread power outages or flooding also can disrupt water systems. Residents should be alert to “boil water” advisories.

Severe storms also bring the threat of flash flooding. Do not attempt to cross flooded areas, either on foot or by vehicle. Flowing water only a few inches deep can move vehicles and knock pedestrians off their feet, sometimes with tragic consequences. Never try to drive through a flooded underpass or over a water-covered road. Water may be much deeper than it appears.

Downed lines and power outages are an inconvenience. Do not allow them to become a health hazard for you, your loved ones or your friends and neighbors.

The Public Service Commission is an agency within the Department of Public Protection in the Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet. It regulates more than 1,500 gas, water, sewer, electric and telecommunication utilities operating in the Commonwealth of Kentucky and has approximately 110 employees.